The 2003 Academic Performance Index (API) Base Report: Explanatory Notes

These *Explanatory Notes* are designed to assist educators and other interested parties in interpreting the *2003 Academic Performance Index (API) Base Report*. The *Explanatory Notes* provide details with respect to the Academic Performance Index (API) and growth target calculations beyond the explanations and footnotes that appear on the report.

The Public Schools Accountability Act

The API is the centerpiece of the statewide accountability system in California public education. The Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) of 1999 (Chapter 3, Statutes of 1999) requires that the California Department of Education (CDE) annually calculate APIs for California public schools, including charter schools, and publish school rankings based on these APIs. The PSAA also requires the establishment of a minimum five-percent annual API growth target for each school as well as an overall statewide API performance target for all schools.

On November 9, 1999, the State Board of Education (SBE):

- Adopted a 1999 base-year API
- Defined the five-percent annual API growth target
- Established an interim statewide API performance target of 800

Awards Programs

A school that meets API growth targets may be eligible for awards under the following programs:

- The Governor's Performance Award Program
- The Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Act (Chapter 52, Statutes of 1999)

These programs are not funded for 2003-2004 and are likely to remain unfunded for 2004-2005.

No Child Left Behind

In 2003 the SBE identified the API as an additional indicator for measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under Title I of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. As a result, school districts also receive API reports. For purposes of NCLB, this includes county

offices of education that administer schools.

To demonstrate progress on the API in 2004, an LEA or school must have a 2003-04 API (Growth) of at least 560 or make at least one point of growth from the 2003 API (Base).

API Reporting Cycle

Each annual API reporting cycle includes two reports: a base report, which appears after the first of the calendar year, and a growth report, which appears after school starts in the fall. This pair of reports is based on APIs calculated in exactly the same fashion with the same indicators but using test results from two different years. The 2003 API Base Report represents the beginning of the fifth API reporting cycle.

The Development of the API

The 2003 API (Base) adds two new components:

- The California Standards Tests in Science (CST Science), grades nine through eleven
- The California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA) for students with the most severe cognitive disabilities, grades two through eleven

In June 2003 the SBE approved a methodology for integrating these new components into the existing API, which had previously included results from:

- The California Achievement Test, 6th Edition Survey (CAT-6 Survey)

- The California Standards Tests (CSTs) in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and history-social science
- The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE).

A change from the 2002-2003 API Growth Reports is that the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) indicator will include results from only grade ten.

The SBE also adopted a new set of indicator weights. A table of these weights is available through the Internet at:

www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api

The final element of the 2003 API Base is a Scale Calibration Factor (SCF). The SCF is a numerical constant that is calculated by grade span (two through six, seven through eight, and nine through eleven) and then added to the API of each school and school district according to grade span.

The SCF may be a positive or negative number. The purpose of the SCF is to enhance the stability and interpretability of the API by ensuring that the statewide average API does not fluctuate solely as the result of adding new API components.

Mobile Students Excluded from the API

California law excludes from a school's API the scores of students who have not been continually enrolled in the same school district since the preceding California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) date. This is the date

in October on which Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) submit data to the CBEDS.

The statewide formula for school mobility differs slightly from the federal definition used to determine AYP. The federal definition holds schools accountable only for the performance of those students continuously enrolled in the school, not in the school district, since the preceding CBEDS date.

There is no difference between the state and federal formula on mobility regarding the school district API: a school district is responsible for the performance of any student continuously enrolled in the school district since the preceding CBEDS date. The test results of any student who has not been continuously enrolled in the school district since CBEDS date are excluded from a school district's API.

Exclusions and Adjustment of Results

Besides student mobility, there are a number of other circumstances that result in excluding test results from the API. Also, test results from students taking the California Standards Tests below their grade level or with modifications are treated as "far below basic." Rules on exclusions and adjustments are included in the Appendix of the *2003 Academic Performance Index Base Report Information Guide* on the CDE Website at:

> http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api

Core Elements of the Report

Certain core elements appear throughout the 2003 API Base Report. They include:

- Number of students included in the 2003 API
- 2003 API (Base)
- 2003 similar schools rank
- 2003-2004 growth target
- 2004 API target

Number of Students Included in the 2003 API

This is the number of students with valid scores, i.e., scores contributing to the school's API. It is possible for a student to have test results contributing to the component score in one content area and not another. For example, if a student did not receive a test score in English-language arts, but did receive a score in mathematics, the student's mathematics results can still be included in the API.

2003 API (Base)

The 2003 API (Base) summarizes the performance of a school district or a school on the 2003 STAR, CAHSEE, and CAPA. The API is on a scale of 200 to 1000. It is calculated from the performance of individual pupils on:

- The CAT-6 Survey (all content areas) as measured through national percentile rankings (NPRs)
- The CSTs as measured through performance levels in ELA, mathematics, history/social science, and science

- The CAPA as measured through performance levels in ELA and mathematics
- The CAHSEE as summarized on a pass/no-pass basis.

APIs may also be calculated for student subgroups. For details on the calculation of the 2003 API (Base), please consult the following document:

> *The 2003 Academic Performance Index Base Report: Information Guide (March 2004)*

This document is available via the Internet at:

> http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api

The API for schools with grade configurations that include grade spans six through seven or eight through nine is the average of the APIs for the grade configuration segments weighted by the number of pupils with valid scores in the segments. For example, for a school with grades seven through twelve, the API is the weighted average of the APIs for grades seven through eight and for grades nine through eleven. This procedure is necessary because the structure of the test varies between grades seven through eight and nine through eleven.

Statewide Rank
All schools that receive APIs are ranked in deciles by school type: elementary, middle, and high. A rank of 10 is the highest and 1 is the lowest. Each decile in each school type contains 10 percent of all schools of that type. School districts and schools in the Alternate Schools Accountability Model (ASAM) do not receive statewide ranks.

Similar Schools Rank
All schools with at least 100 students with test results included in the API are also ranked in deciles by school type when compared to schools with similar characteristics. The PSAA specifies these characteristics to include:

- Pupil mobility
- Pupil ethnicity
- Pupil socioeconomic status
- Percentage of teachers who are fully credentialed
- Percentage of teachers who hold emergency credentials
- Percentage of pupils who are English language learners
- Average class size per grade level
- Whether the schools operate multitrack year-round educational programs

To derive these ranks, the CDE employed standard statistical procedures to generate a school characteristics index. All legally required characteristics were considered as part of these procedures. The characteristics index was then employed in the following fashion to determine the "similar schools rank" of an individual school:

- Form a comparison group of schools for an individual school by listing all schools (of the same school type) in order (high to low) based on the school characteristics index.
- Select the 100 most similar schools are selected, that is, the 50 schools immediately above and 50 schools immediately below a selected school. In the event that the individual school's characteristics index was within 50 of either the top

or the bottom of the statewide distribution, that school's comparison group became either the top 100 schools by school characteristics index or the bottom 100 as appropriate.

- Separate the 100 schools in the comparison group into deciles according to the value of their 2002 APIs.
- Compare the API of the individual school to the APIs of the schools in its comparison group.
- Assign the appropriate decile rank to the individual school

Schools in the Alternate Schools Accountability Model (ASAM) do not receive similar schools ranks.

2003-04 Schoolwide Growth Target
A school's growth target is calculated by taking five percent of the distance between a school's 2003 API Base and the statewide performance target of 800. For any school with a 2003 API Base of 781 to 799, the annual growth target is one point. Any school with an API of 800 or more must maintain an API of at least 800. School districts and ASAM schools do not receive growth targets.

2004 Target
The API target is the sum of the 2003 API and the growth target, except for schools with a 2003 API Base of 800 or more. Schools with an API of 800 or more are expected to maintain a score of 800 or more. School districts and ASAM schools do not receive targets.

Structure of the Report
The 2003 API Base Report is composed of:

1. *County and District Lists of Schools*
2. *District Reports*
3. *School Reports*

List of Schools
These lists include all public schools in a school district or county for which the CDE has calculated an API. The schools are listed alphabetically by type (elementary, middle, high, small, and ASAM). Schools with non-traditional grade configurations, (e.g., seven through twelve) have been placed into a school type according to standard criteria established by the CDE.

APIs for small schools, (i.e., with between 11 and 99 valid STAR scores) are asterisked. APIs based on small numbers of students are less reliable and therefore should be interpreted with care.

Schools on the Lists without APIs
Some schools appear on the list of schools without APIs because they have had their 2003 API Base invalidated. Under regulations adopted by the SBE, this may have occurred for one of several reasons:

- Adult testing irregularities involving five percent or more of the students tested have occurred at the school.
- The rate of students who have been excused from STAR testing by parent request is equal to or greater than 10 percent (schools with rates between 10 percent and 20 percent have had their APIs reevaluated through standard statistical tests to check the representativeness of the tested population).

- The school failed to test 85 percent of its students in a particular content area (either CAT-6 Survey or CSTs).
- The school has unresolved problems with STAR demographic data.

School District Report

A *School District Report* is generated for each LEA that administers schools to comply with the state's accountability plan under the NCLB. School districts do not have five-percent growth targets. To demonstrate progress on the API for federal purposes, school districts must have a 2003-04 API (Growth) of 560 or demonstrate a one-point increase from the 2003 API Base.

School Report

A *School Report* is generated for each school that has API information displayed on the *List of Schools.* In addition to the common core elements, the *School Report* includes:

- Data on subgroups
- School demographic characteristics

Reports for ASAM schools do not include demographic characteristics.

Subgroups

The PSAA defines a "numerically significant ethnic or socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup" as a subgroup "that constitutes at least fifteen percent of a school's total pupil population and consists of at least thirty pupils." Also, under the law, if a subgroup defined by ethnicity or socioeconomic disadvantage constitutes at least 100 pupils, i.e., at least 100 pupils with valid STAR scores,

that subgroup is "numerically significant" and required to demonstrate comparable improvement, even if it does not constitute 15 percent of the school population.

APIs for numerically significant student subgroups are also generated at the school district level. Since school districts do not receive growth targets, student subgroups in school districts are not subject to the comparable improvement requirement.

These numerical criteria (fifteen percent and 30 pupils, or 100 pupils) are calculated on the basis of the number of pupils with valid STAR scores for that subgroup.

The school is responsible for demonstrating comparable improvement only for those subgroups that are numerically significant for both the 2003 API Base and the 2003-04 API (Growth).

Ethnic/racial subgroups include:
- African American (not of Hispanic origin)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Filipino
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander
- White (not of Hispanic origin)

According to the definition adopted by the SBE, the "socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroup" consists of pupils who meet either one of two criteria:

1) Neither of the pupil's parents has received a high school diploma

OR

2) The pupil participates in the free-or-reduced price lunch program.

Information from the 2003 STAR or CAHSEE student answer document determines whether a student meets either criterion.

A pupil may be a member of more than one student subgroup. Therefore, it is possible that the total percentage of students in all numerically significant subgroups at a school may exceed 100.

Comparable Improvement

By regulation, "comparable improvement" requires that each numerically significant subgroup must meet or exceed 80 percent of the 2003-04 schoolwide growth target.

The 2003-04 subgroup target is calculated by first multiplying the schoolwide target by 80 percent and then rounding the product to the nearest whole number.

There are four minor exceptions to this rule:

1. For subgroups within schools with schoolwide APIs between 790 and 799, i.e., approaching the statewide interim performance target of 800, the annual growth target is one point.

2. Regardless of the schoolwide API, subgroups already at or above 800 must continue to meet the statewide interim performance target of 800.

3. In schools with 2003 APIs of 800 or more, subgroups with an API of less than 800 must make growth of at least one point.

4. In instances where 80 percent of the schoolwide target results in a subgroup target that would exceed the distance from the subgroup API to 800, the subgroup target equals the distance to 800.

School Demographic Characteristics

Along with general subgroup and schoolwide demographic data, the *School Report* includes the demographic characteristics on which the school characteristics index for the 2003 API Base similar schools rankings is based. The data for the percentages and rates were collected from these sources:

1. October 2002 CBEDS data collection (information on teacher credentials, multi-track year round participation, and average class size)

2. 2003 STAR student answer document (information on ethnic/racial distribution, parental education level, participation in free or reduced price lunch program, school mobility, the number of English learners, the total number of students who took any test, the total number of students who took CAPA as well as the number of students excused from testing at the request of their parents)

Regarding information taken from CBEDS:

- It is possible for one teacher to be in both the fully credentialed and emergency credential categories; therefore, the total of the

percentages for "Fully credentialled teachers" and "Teachers with emergency credentials" may exceed 100 percent.

- Average class sizes were derived from the enrollment data reported on the Professional Assignment Information Form (PAIF).

- The item "core academic courses in departmentalized programs" reflects average class size in the following subject areas: English, foreign languages, math, science, and social science.

Regarding background characteristics derived from the STAR student answer document:

- School mobility from the prior year is the percentage of students who have not been continuously enrolled in the school since the preceding school year. .

- School mobility from the CBEDS date is the percentage of students who have not been continuously enrolled in the school since CBEDS date of the preceding calendar year.

- District mobility from the CBEDS date is the percentage of students who have not been continuously enrolled in the school district since the CBEDS date of the preceding calendar year. Students who have not been continuously enrolled in the school district since CBEDS date of the preceding calendar year are excluded from a school's API.

Some of the School Demographic Characteristics that appear on this report are used in the formation of the similar schools comparison groups for the similar schools ranking on the 2003 API Base Report.